

### Friends Historical Association

FRIENDS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is devoted to the study, preservation, and publication of material relating to the history of the Religious Society of Friends. It was founded in Philadelphia in 1873 and incorporated in 1875. A similar group, Friends' Historical Society of Philadelphia, founded in 1904, merged with the older body in 1923 to form an organization which has become national, even international in membership and interests, and which anyone, Friend or not, may join. More than 700 members in thirty states, in Canada, and abroad, belong to the ASSOCIATION. Eighty-three libraries in North America and Europe receive its principal publication, the semiannual QUAKER HISTORY, begun in 1906, and formerly known as the *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*.

The ASSOCIATION holds two stated meetings each year, an annual meeting in Eleventh Month in Philadelphia, and a historical pilgrimage in Fifth Month to some region associated with the history of Quakerism.

Many Quaker historical relics belonging to the ASSOCIATION are on display in Philadelphia at the Atwater Kent Museum, 15 South Seventh Street, and in the Friends Meetinghouse, 304 Arch Street.

Those who are interested in the objects of the ASSOCIATION are invited to send their names to Friends Historical Association, Haverford College Library, Haverford, Pennsylvania 19041. The annual dues, which include a subscription to QUAKER HISTORY, are \$4.00; life membership is \$75.00; perpetual membership, \$1000.00. Dues and contributions to the ASSOCIATION are deductible for income tax purposes.

General correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary, Mary Hoxie Jones, 757 Polo Road, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania 19010.

Editorial matters and manuscripts submitted for publication should be sent to the Editor, Lyman W. Riley, Charles Patterson Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. In preparing MSS for submission contributors are encouraged to conform to the rules laid down in the *MLA Style Sheet*.

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# QUAKER HISTORY

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## JOHN NEEDLES (1786-1878): AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*Edited by* EDWARD NEEDLES WRIGHT\*

### *Introduction*

John Needles' autobiography, written at the request of his son, Edward, carries his life to 1872, within six years of his death. This account in his own handwriting was discovered among papers of the Needles family in the possession of the editor and, to the best of his knowledge, has never appeared before in printed form. The only way in which the original manuscript has been changed has been to break it down into sentences and paragraphs for the sake of clarity.

John Needles was born of Quaker parents, Edward and Mary (Lamb) Needles, on 10th month 4th, 1786, in Talbot County, Maryland.<sup>1</sup> It is evident from his account that most of his early life was spent on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, in the counties of Talbot, Princess Anne, Caroline, and Kent, and his adult years in and around Baltimore.

From his earliest years to the day of his death John Needles was an ardent and active Quaker. Although not mentioned by him specifically in his autobiography, he had the unusual record of "attending sixty-nine consecutive Yearly Meetings" and of visiting "all of the Yearly Meetings of our Society (except Illinois, recently established) and some of them several times, as well as many of the Quarterly and other Meetings, and in some instances the families composing them."<sup>2</sup> Mention is also made of "his religious labors which extended over a long period of years, during which he made numerous journeys to various parts of the country, often traveling in his own carriage with other ministering Friends, sometimes being

\* Edward Wright, of Moylan, Pennsylvania, is a great-grandson of John Needles.

<sup>1</sup> *Record of the Man, Needles (Nedels), and Hambleton Families; with Others Affiliated Thereunto. A.D. 1495 to A.D. 1876, et seq.* (Printed for the Subscribers by Edmund Deacon, Philadelphia, 1876.) John Needles was the first custodian of the Needles family copy, which contains later manuscript family records.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorial to John Needles read in and approved by Baltimore Meeting of Men and Women Friends, held 9th month 4th, 1879; by Baltimore Quarterly Meeting, held at Gunpowder, 8th of 9th month, 1879; and by Baltimore Yearly Meeting, held by adjournments, from the 27th of 10th month to the 30th of the same, inclusive, 1879.*

absent for several months at a time." Furthermore, "he took a lively interest in whatever tended to the relief and uplifting of humanity" and meeting activities, such as First-Day schools and Bible classes, received his sympathy and encouragement.<sup>3</sup>

It is understandable that John Needles chose cabinetmaking as his profession, partly because of his father, who likewise was a cabinetmaker, and partly because of his extensive training, first as an apprentice and then as a journeyman. It is perhaps more remarkable that, with his limited and sporadic education, he developed such skill and artistry in the handling of the materials of his trade. Although his work as a cabinetmaker has long been known, enjoyed, and appreciated by his immediate family, relatives, and friends, and by a few connoisseurs, it has been only fairly recently that his furniture has received full recognition and that he has been acknowledged as one of the few fine American cabinetmakers of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

John Needles was very much a family man as illustrated by the constant references to his parents, brothers and sisters, wife, children, and relatives. He had a brother, Joseph, two years older, and the following half-sisters and -brothers by his father's second marriage: Elizabeth, James, Sarah, and Edward. His father also had a twin brother, John, after whom he was probably named. John Needles, the diarist, and his first wife, Eliza Matthews, had as children: Mary, Ruthanna, Edith, Anna Maria, Edward, Eliza, John, Sarah, and Helen, all of whom survived him. In his autobiography John Needles mentions only his first wife but he subsequently married Lydia Smith and, after her death, Mary Ann Bowers.

In addition to his family, meeting, and business obligations, John Needles was active throughout most of his life in the cause of slaves and freedmen. In the account of his life he mentions several slaveholders' conventions and his associations with Benjamin Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison, those controversial figures in the early anti-slavery and abolitionist movements, but he fails to mention that at the end of the Civil War (11th month 5th, 1864) he was appointed president of the "Friends' Association in aid of Freedmen" which,

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Charles F. Montgomery, Curator of the Winterthur Museum, "John Needles—Baltimore Cabinetmaker," in *Antiques*, April, 1954, and Robert G. Breen, "Something New Has Been Added to the Antique," in the *Baltimore Sun*, May 17, 1954. Apparently all of the known furniture which he made for his family was made from maple because, with his Quaker simplicity and avoidance of ostentation, he preferred not to work with mahogany and other expensive woods.

after only three years of existence, turned over its assets to the association known as "A Shelter for Orphans of Colored Soldiers and friendless Colored Children of Baltimore."<sup>5</sup>

Strenuous and eventful as his life was, including such things as family accidents and illnesses, the War of 1812 and the Civil War, plague, fires, business losses, antislavery agitation, and Quaker activities of all kinds, his end seems to have been a peaceful one. As Mary L. Roberts, his eldest daughter, describes it, while on a visit to friends near Chestertown, Maryland, "He was walking out alone, and apparently quietly laid down on the grass and his redeemed spirit passed away: just as he would have desired, no pain or trouble to anyone, just translated to His Heavenly Father's Rest whom he had earnestly desired to serve."<sup>6</sup>

#### *The Autobiography*

DEAR EDWARD<sup>7</sup> as thee says in thy note asking of me to give some account of the beginning of my days of existence I will begin with my birth. By the account on record I was born on the 4th day of 10th Month 1786—in Talbot County sate [state] of Maryland Near Choptank River place called The High banks the highest on the river from one end of the river to the other end. My earliest remembrance is when I was four years old. My brother James was born of My Fathers second wife. My Mother died when I was about one year old but not withstanding I have been told that I saw Baltimore. My Father and Mother coming to Yearly Meeting there brought me with them when I was an Infant (of how the Town looked I do not remember). When about seven years of age I was sent to School to a teacher by the name of William Voux an Irishman who knew how to whip as well as to teach. With him I remained several years and I learned how to read and write but little. I read in a Dilworth Spelling book and in the bible and I have now in my possession the

<sup>5</sup> From a bound manuscript of the constitution and proceedings of the Friends' Association in aid of Freedmen in the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.

<sup>6</sup> In *Record of the Man, Needles (Nedels) and Hambleton Families* (see n. 1).

<sup>7</sup> It was to Edward Man Needles (1823-1901), John Needles' eldest son, that this autobiographical account was addressed. In his later life Edward Needles was the Quaker President of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and President of the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company of Philadelphia.

same bible which I read in at School. I do not rember of any other reading booke in the School but what was calcd *Sphaller*—no grammer or history taught in that School. The next teacher I went to was Nicholas Loveday. He was supirior to Voux or *Vaukx*.

As to my life in childhood I do not remember much worth relating. I think of some mescheavous acts and not much of good. My Father was a Cabinett Maker and had a work Shop on his farm, had Aprentices to help him in the shop and he carried on his farm also. He made wheat fans and boats they called battoes for fishing. His landing was a place where people come to catch Shad. My Father had a seine to catch Shad and a net with a long handle to catch rock fish. I remember one time they caught a Sturgeon and cut it up and dried it like bacon. One thing I remember they buried the *roes* said if the hogs eat them it would poison them. I remember my Father was very carefull to take me to Meeting with him. I was sett to work early and have continued to work ever since. Went Mill with bag of grain on horsback from nine years of age drove carriage before 10 years old and an oxcart to the woods to haul wood.

I rember when 9 years old of the death of My Uncle John Needles a twin brother to My Father. He was a man of talent—in time of the revolutionary war he was Sherref of Talbot County and was concientious in enforing Miletary fines—he was early in life convinced of the principals of Friends and was made use of in Society buiseness\* and in the year 1795 he was appointed with other Friends as a Commitee to present a Memorial to the legeslatur of Maryland at Annopolis to induce the assemblymen in Session to alter some laws relative to the African race. At that time the law was so as to prevent any one from setting there Slaves free by last Will—and ther labours were suceffull to causs that law to be repealed and the law remained so as to lett Slave[s] be sett free for Many Years but Slavery still existed and grew wors and worse when about the year 1841 there was a Slaveholders convention convened at Annappolis. Their object was to induce the legislature to pass more restringing laws on Slaves.

\* Although in this manuscript John Needles usually spelled this word "buiseness," he also wrote it occasionally "business" and "buisness." Actually this is a word which has been spelled in various ways in various times and places. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, England, 1961), there is authority for the following spellings: bisiznis, bisenes, bisines, bisynesse, bysinnesse, bissyne, bissyne, besenes, bysynesse, besynes, busynesse, besiness, bessynes, busines, buis'ness, business, and others.

Then the law was again enacted to prevent Manumission of Slaves at all unless they ware sent out of the State. The Cononation [Colonization] Society was then very popular to send free colored people to Liberia—much expence was incured and but little done.

When I read in the paper the account of the Slaveholders convention intending to meet the account of it Struck at the very life in me as said go down and attend it which when the time arrived the concern was still with me and I went to Annapolis and went in to the room where the convention was conveyed and stood up before them. Many of them knew me and looked at me with astonishmend and a resolution was proposed not to suffer any Abolitionist to be in the room. I rember my feelings to the present day. All fear was taken from me for I perceived there was a Power above and over them and they could not molest me. But Charles Torrey<sup>9</sup> was in the room taking notes to be published in new paper. Him they found and hurried him out right by me and took him dow[n] to a Magastrait searched him for incendry papers and found some northeren papers in his pocket. He was committed to Jail—brought out next day to be tryed for breach of law which law said any Citizen of Maryland—writing publishing or circulating any things that would excite Slaves to rebell shall on conviction sent to the Petentary for so many years. Torrey was accordingly brought out before a court to be tryed and his enemyes thought they had him secure. A lawyer plead hard against him for a time setting forth his crime in glowing colours. His enemyney thought they had him sure when Thomas Alexander a lawyer volentiered his Services and soon convinced the croud that Torrey had not transgressed the law by having those papers in his pocket. Alexander said you can do nothing with my cliant for what doze your law say a citizen of Maryland doing thus and so. My cliant is not a citizen of Maryland and you have nothing against him. Therefore he must be sett at liberty and so he was discharged & thus ended the case—that night I lodged at the tavern when the house was so full of Slave holders that I slept on the flore. I had much talk with them untill Eleven Oclock at night and no insult was offered to me.—such was the zeal of the convention that many resolutions were offered and laws proposed to the legislature then in Session that ware so inconsistent that few of them were considered or passed.

<sup>9</sup> The Rev. Charles Torrey (1813–1846), abolitionist editor and former agent of the Massachusetts Abolition Society. The incident related here (January, 1842) gained national attention and made Torrey famous.



I must now return to the days of my youth—very little occurred to me for some time. My Father had married a second wife a worthy Friend Sarah Berry who belonged to the same Meeting—Tuckeho [Tuckahoe]—at that time a preparative Meeting by whom he had the following children—Elizabeth 6 mo 11 1789—James 31 of 1 m 1791 Sarah 21 of 3 mo 1794 and Edward—she died eight days after his birth. Edward born 28th of 8 mo 1796. 9 mo 24 1797 I was placed in Easton with my Uncle Samuel Yarnall—his wife Sarah was My Mothers Sister—with whom I lived during the time my Father was traveling as companion for Susannah Matthews on a religious visit to Redstone Quarterly Meeting [southwestern Pennsylvania]. Then returned and went down South to lower part of Virginia when returned 28th of 8th mo 1798. After my fathers return home I went home.

There has been several incidents of my life which I have omitted. One is that My Father having met with Jarvis Johnson a friend from Ireland and his companion Alexander Wilson from Philadelphia. As they were visiting Meetings they held one at Greensborough on a certain day 20 miles from our house. My Father sent me on horseback with a letter to Alexander Wilson where I went. Meeting gathered before I got there. I went in when Meeting broke up. Jarvis requested all that were members to remain a while longer as he had something to communicate to them—there was a friend who lived near the Meeting house where dinner was prepared for friends. I delivered the letter to A Wilson as we walked down toward the house—Joseph Turner who lived then at the Head of Chester<sup>10</sup> was in company with those friends—and as we were walking down toward the house Jarvis Johnson felt a stop in his mind which said he could not eat bread in that house and we all then got our horses and left—(My Father told me I might keep with the friends until they come to his house which was the next day). We rode about ten miles to Solomon Kentons before we got anything to eat. That night we went to a Meeting appointed to be held at the house of [ ]<sup>11</sup> Wilson one of those called Nicholites—after Meeting returned to Solomon Kenton to lodge that night. I slept with Joseph Turner and [and he] was a

<sup>10</sup> This evidently means the head of the Chester River in Queen Annes County.

<sup>11</sup> In several instances, where John Needles forgot the first name of a person, a place, or a certain date, research has failed to disclose the missing item. However, in general, he was very careful in writing names legibly although not always following a consistent pattern of spelling.

great friend to me as long as he lived—next day we attended a Meeting appointed at Tuckeho meeting house then home to my fathers.

My Father lived but a short time after this. He had his mind drawn towards a third Marriage with Susanah Matthews with whom he had been traveling. He left home to go to her house about a week or 10 days before his death which occurred at her house on 17th day of 12th mo 1798 at which my self and Sister Elizabeth were at School when information came that our Father was dead—next day I drove the carriage with two horses up to Susanah Matthews where he was a corpse—he had given directions to be put in a plain pine coffin all white no colouring matter put on it. He was brought in the coffin to My Uncle Tristram Needles who lived on the farm adjoining My Fathers farm. Kept there until next day then buried in the grave Yard at Tuckeho by the side of My Mother where it may be found by a stone at the head with name on the stone—one circumstance occurred which would appear unnatural was that I had to drive our Carriage from Susanah Matthews [sic] down to Uncle Tristrams—then next day to the funeral and home and on the road home sister Elizabeth was standing against the carriage door & it came open and she fell backwards out to the ground and the wheel passed over her head cutting to the bone. She received no other hurt that after a time got well.

The next day our family being collected at our house My Fathers Will was read in the presence of us all—Uncle William Needles was with us. We all separated next day. Aunt Mary Berry had been keeping house for My Father since her Sisters death. Myself and brother James went home with Uncle William Needles over the river in Caroline County where we remained until some time in the early Spring. I do not remember how long it was (all that was given to me was the bible that I read in at School). Me and Brother James was taken to Easton—then I went to my Grand Fathers *Pierce Lamb* who lived in Kent County 8 miles from Chester-town. James went to live with his Uncle Thomas Berry at the head of Chester. I lived with my Grand Father near two years. Went to School from there. Near 4 miles to walk to an Irish Man by the name of Patrick Drugan who sometimes got drunk. I learned some there but not much. About 8th or 9th Month I was sent to Smyrna Delaware to James Idinges School. Boarded in his family. Here I learned more than I had ever before. It was a good School. Here I learned grammar the first I ever had. But at a time I was taking in

learning I was taken away only three Months at this place. While I was living at my grand Fathers I was taken regular to Meeting—to Ceicil [Cecil] Meeting house. We had full Meetings on first days at that time many worthy friends then belonging to it. Casander Corse was a worth Minister. A Monthly Meeting was established at that place in 1698 and the Meeting is still existing Cecil Monthly Meeting now 1871 12 m° 26th. I was taken from school at Smyrna and sent to Easton to my Uncle Samuel Yarnalls to be in his store whare I remained untill I was sixteen years of age.

I will now go back to the time when I was living with my uncle while My Father was traveling and untill I went to live with James Neall. It was in the year 1798 I was enoculated for Small Pox when a general enoculation was performed in Easton. I did not know of but one person who died on account of having it and he I suppose must to have been Intoxicated as he laid out all night exposed to the weather. I had a slight attact only when My Father left me to go traveling & when in Baltimore he sent to me Job Scott Journal<sup>12</sup> which I read with much Interest and this day I value it above all other Journals that I have read and to show his concern for plainness he wrote me a letter in which he expressed a concern for plainness by mentioning in his letter that when he bid me farewell he observed that my cravat was tied in a bow knot.

Both at School amoung boys who ware verry profane in language and conduct we [he?] would have me to Joine with them but as to profane language it was abhorant to me to heare and I was preserved by an Almighty Power all through my life from that habit for now I do not remember of ever uttering an Oath. When living in Easton there was a boy boarding in the house with me whose conduct was verry improper and I was some times perswaded to go about with him but there was somethings within me that condemned me and showed me what was wrong.

I remember that while I was with my Uncle in Easton those called Nicholites made a request to be received into membership with Friends and a Monthly Meeting held untill night then adjourned to next day and forty members were received at that time and some afterwards. They resided in Caroline County. They had Meetings

<sup>12</sup> *Journal of the Life, Travels, and Gospel Labours of That Faithful Servant and Minister of Christ, Job Scott* (New York, 1797).

at Northwest Fork—Center and Marsha [Marshy] Creek.<sup>13</sup> The names of the Meetings have bean changed to Snow hill and [ ]<sup>14</sup> but the name of The Monthly Meeting is the same Northwest Fork.

While I was living with My Uncle Samuel Yarnall he bought a farm one mile from Easton and went on to improve it with hard work himself. When one verry warm day he got into a perspiration by hard work & having his dinner sent out to him he in his Shirt Sleeves sat under a tree where he was taken with a convulsion Fit and brought home. Now the cause of this fit was a suden check of perspiration. He continud to have these fits once a month as long as he lived which was about four years. They ware called Ippopteetick fits. I was much with him and could tell when one was coming on him and if standing up would fall down did struggle for a little while & come to his sences again. A short time before his death he had a fall down staires which I thought shortened his life. A short time before he died I was setting by him and he made a request of me to look after his two daughters Susan and Rebecca. He had no son. He appeared composed in his mind ready and willing to depart. I believe he had no enemyes and love for every one. I was at this time an apprentice and could not be much with him in day time. I do not remember the time but I think I was near twenty years of age.

When I was 16 years old I was bound to James Neal a Cabinett Maker in Easton. When about 17 I had a heavenly illumination one night which to my Minde appeared to me like unto the vision of the Apostle Paul for I did not think I was asleep but the sceence was to me Most delightfull. Then I renwe [renewed] my promises (*which I had often made before*) that if my Heavenly Father would be with me and protect me I would follow him whare so ever he would lead me—but such resolutions are often made and may be compared to those written in the sand and forgotten when temptation is presented to take pleasure in the amusements of the passing time.

The time of my apprenticeship was a plesant one. I was treated by James and Rachel his wife as one of their Children. Was fond of going to Meeting and attended pretty regularly on first days and was

<sup>13</sup> This meeting was near Federalsburg, on Marshyhope Creek, in Caroline County, Maryland. For the Nicholites see Kenneth L. Carroll, *Joseph Nichols and the Nicholites* (Easton, Md., 1962).

<sup>14</sup> Marshy Creek Meeting later became Snow Hill. John Needles omitted the name of the second meeting.

glad when the days come round that I could go on week day which were Monthly and Quarterly Meetings. During my Apprenticeship I had to associate with some unprofitable company. One boy a hard swarmer which to me was very unpleasant to hear and as evil communication may corrupt good manners I was in danger. One time I was persuaded to go with one of the boys to get watermelons. He said he had the privilege to get them. I knew he was in the habit of visiting that family and I believed him but I found out that he had not that privilege and I found it right for me to go to the Man and make acknowledgement for my acts. I always had the opportunity of keeping good company among Friends. My Aunt Sarah Yarnall was as a Mother to me and I was frequently there and several other friends houses—and I would advise all young men to be careful the company they keep be not afraid of going among older persons for thereby you may learn. Do not seek company that is more Ignorant than your selves for of Such you cannot [cannot] be improved but may be lowered in understanding.

I now come to the State of Manhood when I must chose for My future time. Being out of my apprenticeship I had to work for a living. At this time My Aunt Sarah Yarnall was living in Easton and I boarded with her and worked Joinerwork with My old Master James Neall. But it was but a short time for he did not want to employ Joiners.<sup>15</sup> Had his work made by apprentices—I was then at a loss to know what to do for the best.—One thing I done very improper—I bought a horse of a horse Jockey and paid 85 dollars for him. Soon found he would if left run away—I borrowed Aunt Sarahs carriage and took a young woman Elizabeth Brown up to Kent to see her friends where she lived. I went to My Grand Mothers my Grand Father was dead. I returned home by my self 45 miles in winter time roads very bad. Got home after night. I thought I had hitched my horse right but did not. I went in the house to get some corn to feed my horse—the door made a noise in shutting. It frightened my horse and he run with the carriage and broke it so as to cost me 15 dollars to repair.

I was now out of business—and My friend Joseph Bartlett had a mind to go out West and invited me to accompany him and I was to stay at his house until he was ready to start. So I went to his house

<sup>15</sup> Journeyman. At this time a journeyman meant a person who had served his apprenticeship in learning a trade.

and helped them work on the farm. Was there about Six Months waiting for Joseph to get ready when in the meantime he made acquaintance with Rhoda Matthews to whom he paid his addresses and was accepted. This turned our western Journey to Baltimore. So I left my horse with Joseph to sell for me as I should not want him more—In the tenth month I accompanied My aunt Sarah Yarnall to Baltimore with a resolution to seek employment. We arrived there 10<sup>m</sup> 1808 time to attend Yearly Meeting—put up at Jonathan Balderstons. His wife Eliza was a niece of Samuel Yarnall and with her I was intimate as a Sister—next morning I set out to find work and found a place with Edward Priestleys. I took my Chest of tools to his Shop then made excuse not to set in for a week—when Yearly Meeting would be over then I went to work found a boarding house so near as to go from the back yard of the Shop to the yard of the house. Paid three dollars & half for board. I found 17 men boarders and the first day I was there there was a fight between two but altho they were a profligate set they always treated me with politeness and attention frequently invited me to go with them to their places of amusements but I felt my mind strengthened by a divine presence that was a guard against those temptations. I believe my plain dress was a hedge round about me so as to keep of those who would have lead me astray [astray]. I continued here nine Months. On first days and evenings I had a privilege of going to friends houses a privilege I greatly prized. I went regular to Meeting first days and fifth days to Meeting in Old town was most convenient to where I worked and boarded—

After a while I changed my place to work and got work at William Camps it being the largest factory in the city. I continued with him until 3<sup>m</sup> 1810. In this Shop were many men and boys. He kept many boys to carry home furniture when sold for at that time furniture was taken home by men and boys no wheel conveyances. The men in the Shop were in the habit of drinking liquor in the Shop about Eleven O'clock. One would go round to collect money to send out to buy the liquor and knowing I would not drink any they did not expect me to pay for it. I think My plain dress was a guard to me but for all I was never insulted by any.

I had thoughts of commencing business for my self and a house was offered to me by Hugh Balderston he having built a house on Lombard Street and moved out of the one on Hanover St N<sup>o</sup> 10—in the third month 1810 I commenced the Cabinet making business—

rent \$125 a year. I had some articles bespoke to begin with. I worked awhile by myself but finding custom enough for more than I could make I employed a journeymen to help then after a while took an apprentice. I found my buisness was increesing and profitable enough to keep house. I also fealt inclination to marry. I had made many acquaintance amoung friends. I had not forgotten what Joseph Bartlett had told me about one young woman a sister to his wife. He said she had a sister who was worth one thousand Pounds and I had a desire to see her and in the course of time I did see her and was not disappointed in what I had been told—

Joseph Bartlett was married to Rhoda Matthews of Gunpowder at whose weding I was invited and attended. Also went home with him to his house Wakefield on the Eastern shore. Some young women of Rodas acquaintance also in company. This hapned with me so that I enlarged my acquaintance. I made several visits to Gunpowder without seeing the one spoken of she being at Westoon<sup>16</sup> School. The first time I had an oppertunity of seeing her was at John Marshs one evening. I went there to spend an evening as I was in the habbet of doing when Mary Marsh Introduced her and me, her as Marys cousin and me as an acquaintance. This was Quarterly Meeting time. Quarterly Meetings were held altogeather in Baltimore. I did not make much acquaintance with her at that time but remembered what Joseph Bartlett had told me. After this I had oppertunities of visiting Gun Powder on wedding occasions, Samuel Wainwright with Matilda Matthews and Thomas Dawson with Edith Matthews sister to Rhoda Bartlett.

I continued my buisness untill I found I was making enough to keep house then I made address to the object of my choice Eliza Matthews I being fully convince that if she would consent we could live happy to geather and through perseverance I was so happy as to gaine her consent to be my companion. I went on with my buisness boarding with Jonathan Balderston and continuing my visists to Mordicai Matthews—20 miles to Gunpowder—all winter and spring unto fifth month. I had rented a dwelling house in German Lane near Sharp Street for \$125 a year furnished it in time to bring a wife to it when she would be ready—which was on the [ ] day of fifth month 1811. Thomas Parsons and Mary Price ware married on the same day with us in the old meeting house Gunpowder. The only objection

<sup>16</sup> Westtown School, Westtown, Pa.

in Elizas Father was that she was too young and young she was not more than seventeen. But I knew her mind was more matured than many at twenty. I am sure neither of us ever had cause to repent of our Union for our lives together was a perfect Union—her pleasure was much mared by bad health which she experienced for several years of her life.

Our first child was born fifth month 1812 at Gunpowder. Soon after this came on a war with England which caused buisness to be very dull. In third month 1812 I rented a house and lott N° 54 Hanover Street and moved down there both Shop and dwelling. I built a work shop back of the dwelling made a worroom<sup>17</sup> for furniture in the front room of the dwelling. I continud my buisness with perseverance through the war which lasted about two years. At one time I had little or nothing to do and sett to making Spining Machines but did not find it profitable. Had two on hand when peace was made and then my buisness so increased that I could not make furniture fast enough to sell. This was about the years 1815 and 16—this continud about three years when buisness took a turn and I very imprudently went into exporting my furniture to South America when in several shipments I lost 1500 dollars—1818. This year I made a great mistake in building a dweling house which cost 6000 dollars thus taking so much out of my buisness the consequence I had to borrow Money on Interest which involved because that in two years time buisness was much depresed. Property reduced in value at least 75 Pcent but through all my difficulty I worked through and on taking an invetary of my effects I found I had more than would pay my debts and have to Spaire.

I have pased over several years of noticing occurance which hapned—I have mentioned the birth of Mary in 1812—our next child which we named Ruthanna she was born 3 mo 4 1815. I do not remember much of what ocured for several years still purserving my buisness. Buisness was good and profitable for several years but I was not cauticious enouth [enough] in Speculations for in 1816 I was perswaded to buy some lots of ground on Federal hill thinking as it was near the water property would improve and advance in price. But I was much mistaken in that for little or no improvement ware

<sup>17</sup> By the word "worroom" John Needles evidently meant a displayroom rather than a workroom or warehouse. He uses the same term, spelled in the same way, in some of his correspondence.



made in that direction for the city improved out North and West and that is the way all cities That I know improve more in that direction than in any way. Edith D Needles my third child born 9m<sup>o</sup> 30th 1817. After the birth of this child her Mother going to work two soon she took cold and had a verry sever spel of sickness so severe that life was dispaired off but she was in great Mercy restored to health—Our next Child Ann Maria Needles born 7 mo 27 1819. Nothing particular occurs to mind worth relating more than I have recorded respecting my building a house in 1818. Our next Child we caled Edward Man Needles. The name Man is an ancient name in our record. He was born 4m<sup>o</sup>-26-1823. I now am at a loss to know what occured between Edwards birth and our next Child which was a daughter who we named Eliza M Needles. The M for Eliza Marsh a beloved Cousin of her Mother. She was born 4<sup>mo</sup>-26th-1826.

In the corse of this year [i.e. 1824] Benjamin Lundy had come to Baltimore from Tennessee where he had bean having printed a paper Called The genius of Univershal Emsipation [*Genius of Universal Emancipation*]. I heard of him and his object. I sought him & found him in an upper room writing of something to have published as an introduction to his paper to be published in this City of Baltimore—Several persons who fealt unity with his action in the cause of emancipation consulted togeather about the best plan to adopt to bring the subject more fully before the publick and it was agreed to form a society to be called the Anteslavery Society of Maryland—a meeting was called and the first meeting was held in My Sister Elizabeth Needles School room. The meeting was organized by Electing a President Vice Presidint a Secretary & treasurer. Meetings ware frequently held. I do not now remember how often. [ ]<sup>18</sup> Raymond was President Edward Needles was Secretary—it was thought it would be best to have a printing Office and publish the paper weekly called the Genius of Universal Emancipation.

I have lost nearly all the papers conected with the Society that I cannot remember many acts of the Society. Adresses ware deliverd and some published in pamplet form for Circulation when it was decided to have a printing Office. B. Lundy borrowd a printing press rented a room—but no type. Then how ware they to be obtained. That lott fell on me. I was to buy the type and several of the company

<sup>18</sup> A careful search of possible sources has failed to disclose any mention of the Raymond whose first name John Needles could not recall.

obligated to pay their proportionable part of the cost. I bought them at a cost of \$350—We now had a printing Office and the paper regularly Ishued to subscribers at a price I have forgot. The length of time it was published I do not rember but not long. B. Lundy sujested The plan to increes the circulation of the paper for him to imploy some one to conduct the Office and for him to travel about to gett subscribers and he wrote for William Loyed Garrison to come to Baltimore and conduct the printing Office. It was found by the Editorials [sic] of the paper that Lundy and Garrison ware not congenial in their Sentements. Lundy was for gradual Emancipation and Garrison for Imediate emancipation. He published some Sharp things in the paper against Slaveholders. One thing was published which was so personal concerning a Captain of a Northeren Vessell for takeing a quantity of Slaves for one of the Slave trader on to New Orleans which so offended him that he Prosecuted Lundy & Garrison for *libal* which caused both of them to be arrested. Garrison was put in Prisson. I do not remember if Lundy was but he was assaltd in the street by Austen [Austin] Woolfolk beaten verry much. For such abuse he could get no redress—thus put a stop to the printing and as I had bought the types they were turned over to me and I sold them for \$40—and my securesities never came forward to bear any of the loss—ther was also met in Baltimore a meeting of the General Convention organized in Philadelphia the proseedings of which was published in pamplett form for Circulation. Many of them ware in a barrell in our printing office and I got possession of them and in corse of time they ware destrubuted in the following manner—I put some in the draws of furnature when sold. At that time I had some Customers from Virginea—South Carolina & New Orleans and the man I imployed to pack up furnature used those pampletts to put among the furnature to keep it from rubing and they ware found when the furnature was unpacked—this gave great offence to Slave holders one man told me that when it was discovered the nature of them that he was summoned before the Governor and ordered to collect them and burn them—I have written a short account of Lundy & Garrison but much more may be found in historyes of their lives published heritofore by abler hands—

Our next Child was born—was a son—name John Amose Needles who was born 10m<sup>o</sup> 1st 1828. Our family had but little change untill 1832. This year part of my factory burnd down a back Shop at a considerable loss. I had insurance of \$500—this amount I turned

over to My wife to sett up a store her daughter Mary assisting her. Before this time I had moved my family to a house on the opposit side of the Street and a Store was opened in the front room making a dore whare was a window. This was a beginning of a Store which has bean continued much to My advantage in making a living for my family. Before this we had another daughter who we called Sarah. She was born 5mo.19th 1831. I mad a great change in my factory after the fire and when finished the building was 25 ft front by 140 feet to a back ally—I also put in opperation a Steam enjoin of four hors Power cost 700 dollars. By it we worked two turning lathes circular saws upright saw tineting [tenoning] machine all of which ware usefull in making furnature. One or two things I wish to impress on the mind of everyone who has to do with steam. Be sure to watch the water gages for one time the water did not go into the boiler and the fireman did not know the reason why he could not make steam enough to drive the machines up above. When the turner ran down to s what was the matter and he knowing more than the fireman immediately put the fire out and took out the end of the boiler and did not find more than a gallon of water in the boiler and the botton had got so hot as to raise Inch & half out of the bed—There is other things I would advise all persons when engaged in putting up a boiler. Be sure that no Iron attached to it will come in contact with wood for I know the danger of that being the cause of a disasteros fire when my factory was burned in 1838 by which I lost 5000 dollars more than the Insurance wood cover.

I left off my narative of famely in 1831. I will now resume it. In 1832 The Cholera was verry bad in Baltimore which took off many of the inhabitants and altho my buiseness took me much amoung the disease yett I was not afraid of taking. I noticed that that my health was unusual good.

I do not now remember any circumstance of importance that hapned untill 1834 when our last child was born a daughter whom we named Helen M Needles named after Helen Mchenry a particular acquaintance. At this time we still lived in the house on The East side of Hanover street and had the Store on the West side having made a Storroom in front of the factory. In 1836 I bout a lott on Hanover Street N° 43 which cost 3000 dollars. 26 ft front run back to an ally which is between a saw mill and my lott. I built a workshop on the back end—30 feet on Uhlers Ally by 45 feet south on the ally. This house cost me 2000 dollars. I built a dwelling house on the front

of lott on Hanover Street that cost 6500 dollars. When this house was finished I moved my famely into it and lived there about two years. Still had my work shop and warrooms on the West side. My buiseness went on all regular as usual untill 8mo. 1838 when a fire took place when the whole Factory burned down. This was truly a great loss. The whole burned down to the cellar. A amount of what burned was 13000—Insurance only 8000—when nothing more could be saved I went across the Street and looked at the ruins my mind purfectly calm and there was a thought presented—I am thankfull I have something left—there was a warehouse emty on the corner of Hanover St and Lombard into which I moved in what furnature had bean saved from the flames. This was my warroom untill I built up again on the lott N° 54 which I went right to work to do. Did not loose a day. I had the Shop on Uhlers Ally to work in. I went on clearing out cellar then to building up a dwelling house—the dry good Store was removed out entire and put in the room in our dwelling on East Side of the Street. Had it shelved in a day and in two days the goods ware ready to Sell—the house next to me was also burned and I bargaind with Joseph Neall the Owner of the lott to put up a four Story house on it for Sixteen years without rent then to give it up to him. I put up both those houses the warehous in six months and the dwelling in seven Months a store room in Front dining room and kitchen back—Stable & Carriage hous on the back Ally. We now Moved the Store back into the new house—had the parlours up in second story moved my furnature into the upper part of the warehouse and give up the one on the corner of Hanover & Lombard.

I was pretty well fixed for buiseness and if I had have bean more cautious in trusting unprincipleal men I would have saved more money. And I most truly know that my losses have nearly all bean caused by not minding the first impressions that that presented to my mind when I was asked to trust a man but not attending to this first impression and say (NO). I suffered the person to fill my mind with arguments and trust them much to my loss and I now advise every one in transacting any buiseness concerns to mind that light which Shines first for if it is disregarded turn our back upon it we will be walking in darkness—I endeavour to attend to impressions that may lead to something good when there is a thought to do any thing whatever either to go or to Stay whare I am. I consider will any good arrise from my act or may evil arrise from it. I endeavour to act so that good may be the result either to my self or some one else—

We were now living in the house on West side of Hanover Street. By this time several of our Children were fully grown up and were married—now about this time my dear wife had very bad health and suffered much pain. She would say to me I am never clear of pain which was a sore trouble to me I not knowing how to relieve her. We sometimes road out and up to Gunpowder occasionally to see her relations but nothing would relieve her. She also suffered from a hurt she had several years back from a fall from a sleigh. Her head was badly cut by falling on the Ice. There was something like an abscess formed in the forehead which discharged through her nose and no application would heal it and it got worse & worse. She continued in this Situation for several years getting worse. She was confined to her room for considerable time not able to get out to meeting which was a source of regret to her as she was always concerned to attend meetings from her Youth. The loss of her company to me was a great trial indeed but as I knew she was released from continual suffering I dared not wish her back to endure More—She had many Friends and no enemies. The great respect shown by the attendance at her funeral I think there must have been 100 persons attending it. It was in the winter season and we thought best to put her in a Vault until the ground would be thawed. I went to the Vault to see her near a week after and her Countenance was perfect as when alive. The weather had been so cold as to keep it from decomposition. She departed this life [11th] day of first Month 1840. Her age was forty six years about seven years younger than Myself we having lived together nearly twenty nine years in the greatest harmony and Unity of feeling. One circumstance I often remember that our thoughts were so congenial that we would often express the same things at the same time.

At this time I had several Children not Married so I had good house keepers for some time but one after another got married and left me. After this I had a concern to travel some and was appointed on Committee to make a visit to Center quarterly meeting on account of a request of friends there in conjunction of Fishing creek half years Meeting belonging to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. They had a desire to hold a Yearly Meeting. After attending to our appointment we concluded to report the [that] we thought the time had not arrived for such a meeting to be held. The place where the quarterly meeting was held was at Westbranch 210 miles from Baltimore near a place

called Grampean Hills in Pennsylvania.<sup>19</sup> We went in my own Carriage to this place. We put up Gedian Widemiers his wife Ruth (formerly Griste) was a cousin to my dear Wife—this country was a new settlement trees standing in the fields girt round for them to die out—rich land—heavily timber of White pine and hemlock. Had a Saw Mill by steam built in among the timber. They sawed lumber and sent it to Baltimore down the Susquahanna. We traveled on a turnpike road all the way but six miles.

I believe I need not write more as my concerns since is familiar to all my Children—I write thus much in My Eighty Sixth year and I am thankful to know that my health is good more clear of pains and aches than I was in former time. Seldom have to take any medicine.

<sup>19</sup> Grampean, Clearfield County, Pa., a village near the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.